



CABINET – 6TH MARCH 2024

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN – OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS 2024-2028

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To ask members to consider and approve the report on the Council's draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 (Appendix A), and for it to progress to Council on 18th April for formal adoption as Council policy.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty in Wales came in to force on 6th April 2011 and included a requirement for public authorities to develop and publish a Strategic Equality Plan every four years. The Council has had a Strategic Equality Plan in place since 2012 and must now update this for the next 4-year cycle, 2024-2028.
- 2.2 Strategic Equality Plans since 2012 have ensured that the Council has a good foundation in place to continue to improve on our objectives and to assist us in meeting three of the well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 to progress the report to be presented to Council for adoption as Council policy.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The council is required under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 to produce a Strategic Equality Plan every four years.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Strategic Equality Plan has been developed to set out how the Council aims to

meet its commitment to equality and how it will meet its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

- 5.2 A comprehensive consultation process took place during October and November 2023 to ensure we involved as many individuals and groups as possible in developing the draft Equality Objectives and suggested Actions.
- 5.3 An engagement report has been produced, the Strategic Equality Plan Consultation Report can be viewed on the following web page, along with all supporting documentation relating to the development stages of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 –

Link to Strategic Equality Plan 2024 – 2028 – Objectives and Actions

- 5.4 Feedback received during the consultation process was strongly in support of the proposed draft objectives. Using this feedback and the data currently relevant to the Council, the seven Equality Objectives contained in the draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 are:
 - 1. **Access to Services and Information**
Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services
 - 2. **Education, Skills and Employment**
Improve education, skills and employment opportunities for all
 - 3. **Inclusive Communities**
Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities
 - 4. **Inclusive and Effective Engagement**
Effectively engage with our communities, overcome barriers to engagement and support and encourage all residents to have their voices heard
 - 5. **Welsh Language**
To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements
 - 6. **Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough
 - 7. **Reducing the Gender Pay Gap**
- 5.5 The Gender Pay Objective is a requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty
- 5.6 An Action Plan has been developed and service areas will be required to embed the actions within their service delivery and provide annual progress updates to include in the Strategic Equality Plan annual reports.
- 5.7 The comments received as part of the consultation, which are not included as actions in the Strategic Equality Plan, will be passed to relevant service areas, as they are deemed service specific, and it will be for those service areas to enact on what has been suggested at a service level.
- 5.8 **Conclusion**

The Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 will ensure that the Council has a fit-for-purpose strategic policy document in place to demonstrate compliance with the latest statutory Equalities and Welsh language duties. It has been developed in line with legislative requirements and guidance produced by the Equality & Human Rights Commission.

- 5.9 The report will be taken to Council on 18th April 2024 for formal adoption as Council policy. Once approved the Plan will be published on the Council's website.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in preparing this Plan.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a general equality duty and a specific public sector equality duty that is applicable to all public authorities. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Equality Duty) requires public authorities to demonstrate that they have paid 'due regard' in their decision-making process to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 7.2 The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation. As a Council we also recognise the Welsh language as a protected characteristic.

- 7.3 A full Integrated Impact Assessment was completed on the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 when being developed and in readiness for the consultation process that followed.

- 7.4 Following the consultation process the impact assessment was updated to reflect any points raised by respondents.

- 7.5 **Link to the full Integrated Impact Assessment.**

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Equality Objective 6 - Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce and Equality Objective 7 – Reducing the Gender Pay Gap both relate to Human Resources activities. The Gender Pay objective is a requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

- 9.2 In light of the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards and the wider requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty, any personnel implications will be dealt with as they arise by People Services and the Equalities and Welsh Language Team and reported on via the annual reports.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report was considered by the Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on 20th February 2024. Scrutiny Committee's comments on the report are as follows:

A member praised the report and suggested that noted the significant number of Welsh speakers in the county borough. It was suggested that a Welsh language centre or hub where people (particularly younger people) can meet and use the Welsh language would be of benefit, to encourage its use in social situations. It was suggested that contact with young people to ask what they would like would also be helpful.

The scrutiny committee was advised that there is a Welsh Language Forum co-ordinated by Menter Iaith Caerffili which the Council are a member of. This brings together Welsh language organisations including Rhieni dros Addysg Gymraeg (RHAG), Mudiad Meithrin, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, local schools, and colleges, etc. which works on different projects with several projects in the pipeline. Caerphilly officers visit schools to discuss the importance of the Welsh language and the benefits of the skills in the workplace. There is a visit planned next week to Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni for example, with Year 10 students to discuss careers and Welsh language skills, with another visit to St Cenydd Comprehensive School the week after to deliver a Year 10 assembly on the same subject.

The member made some suggestions regarding encouraging Welsh language singers or groups at Caerphilly events to promote it further.

A member asked if it would be possible to hold short Welsh language sessions for Members to teach some simple words or phrases. It was suggested that this could be arranged prior to Council meetings as a drop -in session for any member.

The scrutiny committee was informed that this is something that could be arranged and there is also a resource available called 'Incidental Welsh' developed by Welsh Government which has been shared with other organisations.

A member commented on his visits to both Welsh medium schools and English medium schools where Welsh was used very effectively both in the classroom and in also encouraged in the playground.

Members praised the equality statement, with the LGBTQ content worth highlighting. The Member particularly mentioned the Pride event held in Caerphilly last year and planned again for this year. The Member thanked everyone involved in organising these events. It was clarified that the Pride event this year will be held in Caerphilly again and this is following the survey from last year when people stated they would like to come back to Caerphilly.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

- 10.2 This report has been sent to the Consultees listed below and all comments received are reflected in this report and appended Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028

(Appendix A).

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017
Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011
Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015
Human Rights Act 1998
Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

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Consultees:

Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director – Economy and Environment
Gareth Jenkins, Interim Director of Social Services
Cllr Eluned Stenner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance
Cllr Philippa Leonard, Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Protection -
Equalities Champion
Cllr Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities - LGBTQ+
Champion
Cllr Gary Johnston, Chair of Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Amanda McConnell, Vice-Chair of Corporate and Regeneration Scrutiny
Committee
Sue Richards, Head of Transformation, Education Planning and Strategy
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Kathryn Peters, Service Manager – Service Improvement and Partnerships
Christopher Hunt, Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator
Elizabeth Sharma, Consultation and Public Engagement Officer
Geraint Ashton, Policy Officer – Equalities and Welsh Language
Karen Williams, Customer Services Digital Hub Manager
Lisa Lane, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Lisa Rawlings, Regional Armed Forces Covenant Officer
Louise Aston, Lead Employment Support Officer
Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure
Mike Headington, Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager
Nick Taylor-Williams, Head of Housing
Rhian Kyte, Head of Planning and Regeneration
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Manager

Background Papers:

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX A - CCBC Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) 2024-2028

All supporting documentation relating to the development stages of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 can be viewed via the link. **Link to Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028**